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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.		
10/533,090	04/29/2005	Norikazu Tabata	IPE-055	2293		
20374	7590	06/17/2009	EXAMINER			
KUBOVCIK & KUBOVCIK SUITE 1105 1215 SOUTH CLARK STREET ARLINGTON, VA 22202				DICKINSON, PAUL W		
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER				
1618						
MAIL DATE		DELIVERY MODE				
06/17/2009		PAPER				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/533,090	TABATA ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	PAUL DICKINSON	1618	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 March 2009.
 2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 11-33,36,38,39 and 41-52 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) 11-33, 36, 38, 39, 41-44 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) 45-52 is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application
 6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 3/16/2009 has been entered.

Rejections and/or objections not reiterated from previous office actions are hereby withdrawn. The following rejections and/or objects are either reiterated or newly applied. They constitute the complete set presently being applied to the instant application.

New Grounds of Rejection

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 45-52 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 45 recites "poly(lactide/glycolide)". It is unclear what polymer this is. Specifically, the use of "/" here is unclear. The polymer could be poly(lactide) or

poly(glycolide) (the “/” meaning “or”), or, in the alternative, the polymer could be poly(lactide-co-glycolide) (the “/” meaning “and”).

Claim 49 recites “a range of average particle size \pm 100 micrometer”. A numerical value is missing before the “ \pm ”. Without some value here, the limit “ \pm 100 micrometer” doesn’t qualify anything and the phrase doesn’t make sense.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102/103

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 45-52 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over WO 9628143 (WO '143; US 6346274 ('274) is an English equivalent) as evidenced by Youxin et al (Youxin et al, Synthesis and properties of biodegradable ABA triblock copolymers consisting of poly(L-lactic acid) or poly(L-lactic-co-glycolic acid) A-blocks attached to central poly(oxyethylene) B-blocks, Journal of Controlled Release, 1993, 27, 247-257). WO '143 teaches a material formed as microparticles containing poly(lactide-co-glycolide)-poly(ethylene glycol)-poly(lactide-co-glycolide) being degradable in a phosphate buffer saline (see '274: abstract; col 6, lines 6-18; Example 1). The microparticles are dispersed in PBS (physiologic saline) (see '274: Example 3). The microparticles preferably have high water swelling ratios to aid in the diffusion of encapsulated protein molecules through the polymer layers (col 3, lines 6-25). Microparticles of this type, made by Youxin et al, are known to have a water swelling ratio of 70-200% (see '274: col 6, lines 19-21; see Youxin et al: abstract; conclusion).

WO '143 fails to teach a swelling ratio of 160% or more. The microparticles of WO '143 meet all the structural limitations of the instant claims in that they are microparticles of poly(lactide-co-glycolide)-poly(ethylene glycol)-poly(lactide-co-glycolide) that degrade in phosphate buffered saline. Thus, it is the position of the Examiner that as the microparticles of WO '143 meet all the structural limitations of the instant claims, they will inherently have a swelling ratio of 160% or more. In the alternative, it would be obvious to optimize this parameter to find the range of 160% or more, as polymers of this type are known to have a swelling ratio of 70-200%.

WO '143 fails to explicitly teach that the microparticles are degradable in a phosphate buffered saline at 37 °C. WO '143 further fails to teach the elastic modulus recited in instant claims 46 and 47. WO '143 further fails to teach the property recited in claim 50. As a composition cannot be separated from its properties, it is the position of the Examiner that these characteristics are inherent in the microparticles of WO '143. WO '143 teaches degradation in a phosphate buffered saline, but does not explicitly teach the temperature of 37 °C. WO '143 teaches that these microparticles biodegrade, i.e. degrade under physiological conditions. As 37 °C is body temperature, it would be reasonable that the microparticles would degrade near this temperature. Regarding the elastic modulus, the instant claims require that a film formed from the claimed microparticles would have a certain elastic modulus. It is the position of the Examiner that a film formed from the particles of WO '143, which share all the structural characteristics of the claimed particles, would inherently have the claimed elastic modulus.

The term “embolization material” is an intended use. The recitation of the intended use of the claimed invention must result in a structural difference between the claimed invention and the prior art in order to patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art. If the prior art structure is capable of performing the intended use, then it meets the claim. In the present case, the microparticles of WO ‘143 are fully capable of being used as an embolization material.

The phrase “formed as virtually spherical particles at 37 °C” is a product-by-process limitation. “[E]ven though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process.” In re Thorpe, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985). See MPEP § 2113. In the present case, the virtually spherical microparticles of WO ‘143 would be identical to those made at a temperature of 37 °C.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to PAUL DICKINSON whose telephone number is (571)270-3499. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thurs 9:00am-6:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner’s supervisor, Michael G. Hartley can be reached on 571-272-0616. The fax phone

number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Michael G. Hartley/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1618

Paul Dickinson
Examiner
AU 1618

June 12, 2009